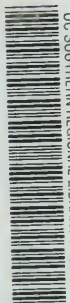


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Scripture Puzzle-Poems.

BY

RICHARD PHILLIPS.

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Scripture Puzzle-Poems.

I.

I was snatched away, when young,
From my kindred, home, and friends—
Torn from all to which I clung,
Just to serve another's ends.

All my being felt the shock ;
Never more was I the same ;
Scion of a stubborn stock,
Hard and callous I became.

I could neither fight nor flee,
Being very weak and small ;
And I cared not to be free,
So I still abode his thrall.

It was little I could do,
But I did it, murmuring not ;
So a trusted friend I grew,
And a lightener of his lot.

But a change came over me,
And he viewed it with alarm ;
For too plainly he could see
That I meant to do him harm.

Murderous, truly, was my mood,
Fierce my bearing, so he fled ;
For he trembled where he stood,
Fearing I might strike him dead.

Then he turned, and in affright
 Seized and held me ; then no more
 Showed I any sign of fight,
 But grew harmless as before.

I obeyed a higher will,
 And a grand new name I won ;
 So he could not take it ill,
 Seeing he had suffered none.

There were many like to me,
 But not any half so great.
 Who another such would see
 Will have very long to wait.

Fire and water, earth and air,—
 Things that fly and things that crawl,
 All my ready servants were—
 Life and death obeyed my call.

I had rivals, but the same
 Came to nothing in affright ;
 Covered with defeat and shame,
 Soon they vanished out of sight.

Thrice I lived, and thrice I died,
 For the breath of life I drew,
 With a double life supplied,
 And a double being, too.

When one went the other stayed ;
 Both together none could see—
 Both together could not fade ;
 Where, then, could the other be ?

I was passionless, and wont
 To obey another's will ;
 But I sometimes changed my front,
 And grew active, though for ill.

Every moment of that life—
 Suddenly it came and fled,
 Was a battle to the knife ;
 For I lived to stir up strife,
 But did greater things when dead.

II.

A member of a plundering horde
 Was once deserted by his lord,
 And left to die ; but help arrived :
 His foes discovered him, half dead
 With thirst and hunger, and revived
 His spirit, which had well-nigh fled.
 But that desertion cost them dear,
 And more than all that they had won
 Who knew not that the same drew near,
 Nor who it was that led them on.

III.

Exalted was my station,
 Although my years were few ;
 A dangerous exaltation,
 But nought thereof I knew.

For I was dull and sunken,
 And wrapt in double night ;
 And heavy as one drunken
 Who cannot sit upright.

While thus I rested, purely
 Unmindful of mine end,
 My downfall came, and surely
 'Twas hastened by a friend.

I perished not thereunder,
 But rose before their eyes,
 Who now were filled with wonder,
 And joyed to see me rise.

Raised up anon and righted,
 I found my false friend fled.
 'Twas one whom I had slighted
 That lifted up my head.

IV.

I wore a crown, and though no king,
 I saved one from the murderer's knife ;
 But thereby gained not anything,
 Till one rose up against my life.

V.

He left his people and his land,
 And faith, perchance, if all were known,
 To join a leader, by whose hand
 A famous townsman of his own
 Was once assaulted and o'erthrown.

Long time in exile he abode,
 Content to serve through good and ill
 A servant of the one true God—
 An exile once against his will,
 And fearful of a worse thing still.

An ill thing once betid his chief,
 And troubled many in the land.
 Bowed down and broken by his grief,
 The great man seemed for once unmanned—
 A thing not hard to understand.

Not knowing how the thing might end,
 Nor where to turn in such a strait,
 He thought to send away his friend ;
 Not wishing him to share the fate
 Of one so ruined in estate.

But this true friend refused to go,—
 And that whatever might betide ;
 And helped to rid him of a foe,
 His greatest grief and yet his pride,
 In whose stead he would fain have died.

VI.

A man once made a fierce assault
 On some who foiled
 A noble end for which he toiled,
 And chid them sharply for their fault ;
 Nor ended there, but made them swear
 To change their way ; but some recoiled
 And fled elsewhither, moved with fear.

VII.

Three names appear upon the sacred page,
 All in the compass of one age ;
 All gentiles, of the same degree.
 Well spoken of were all the three,
 Yet all as heathen folk began,
 And one was still a heathen man.
 The first of these was humble and yet bold :
 His name remains a thing untold.
 The second, who was greatly blest,
 Once entertained a heaven-sent guest :
 The third, when all appeared undone,
 Saved many for the sake of one.

VIII.

A monarch who was sore afraid
 Of losing all that he had won,
 And life itself, if he delayed
 To do a thing best left undone,
 Called in two helpers to his aid ;
 And this became a deadlier hurt
 Than what he laboured to avert.
 In what a crooked path he trod !
 And yet he trusted more therein
 Than in a promise made by God.

He sinned, and made the people sin.
 For, smarting from an iron rod,
 The same were fain of such a head,
 And gladly followed where he led.

IX.

They fight, and they prevail, and then
 All gladness they forswear.
 They slink back home like vanquished men,
 And with a guilty air.
 But as for one, what tongue or pen
 His anguish can declare ?
 What pencil picture his despair ?

X.

A man who knew not danger lurked so near,
 Was once made prisoner by a foreign foe,
 Who told him truly he had nought to fear,
 If prompt to tell them what he needs must know.
 And this he did—causing a world of woe ;
 And thus protected what he held most dear.
 Then went elsewhither, hindered now by none,
 And built a city as the records show,
 And called it by the same name as the one
 Which by his treachery he had clean undone.

XI.

A would-be traitor, bent on ill,
 Was early thwarted in his plan,
 And by the treachery of a man
 Whose brother he was forced to kill.
 He fell lamented by a foe
 Who blamed his slayer for the blow,
 And would have punished him therefor,
 But durst not ; for the same, we know,
 Was mighty, and a man of war.

XII.

Though smitten with a foul complaint,
 He suffered not for any crime.
 It vanished soon, and left no taint,
 But came, perchance, another time.
 Yet, if it did, it missed its aim,
 And went as swiftly as it came.

XIII.

Somewhere this 'story has been penned :—

A selfish man
 Was once indebted to a friend
 Who met with an untimely end,
 And that within a little span
 After their fellowship began.

It sprang up in a trying time—

All seemed amiss.
 Alone, and in a foreign clime,
 Amongst a people steeped in crime,
 He deemed it not a little bliss
 To light on such a friend as this.

And yet he never asked for aid ;

It came unsought.
 He hailed its coming, while it stayed
 He blest it, and had fain delayed
 Its going, for the ease it brought ;
 The more so as it cost him nought.

When, smitten by an unseen foe,

His helper died,
 He seemed distracted by the blow,
 And called for death to lay him low ;
 Not caring to outlive that tide ;
 And no man marked him when he cried.

XIV.

A traveller sets out on a perilous track.
 Not long is the journey, but rough is the way.
 And he hasn't gone far when he finds in dismay
 That he cannot go forward nor yet return back,
 Nor stay where he is, though he cares not to stay.

XV.

As long as in the flesh I dwelt
 I ne'er was seen, though often felt ;
 And death to many a thing I dealt.

My master died, and, hapless case !
 Was eaten by a ravenous race ;
 I nearly shared the same disgrace.

I lay concealed. They found my lair,
 And, raging, fell upon me there ;
 And left me helpless, bruised, and bare.

Scarce from that trouble was I freed,
 When one, a stranger, in his need,
 Beheld me, victim of their greed.

He seized me, even as I lay,
 And did great things upon that day ;
 This done, he went upon his way.

He deemed me now a thing of nought,
 And left me, with a passing thought,
 Amid the ruin I had wrought.

XVI.

He told them he had met a foe,
 And helped him when he lay alow,
 Although the same had spoiled his land.

And men were troubled when they heard.
 He lied, but they believed his word ;
 Were not the plain proofs in his hand ?

They did to him what he had done,
 According to his tale, to one
 Whose name was hateful to his race.
 'Twas not the guerdon that he sought,
 But worse than nothing, and was fraught
 With sorrow, for it changed his face.

XVII.

They ask and have ; but, not content,
 They will not take the thing when sent :
 In fear and wonder they refuse.
 And chide the bringer of the news.

XVIII.

A sage on whom the true light shone,
 Had once a servant scant of wit ;
 But God enlightened her, whereon
 She did what she had never done,
 And much was he amazed at it.

XIX.

The servant of a kindly king,
 Whose life was threatened, was advised
 To do what seemed a prudent thing ;
 But all such counsel he despised ;
 And this was from a foe disguised,
 And one confederate with his foes ;
 But of their plotting well apprised,
 He warily escaped their blows,
 And braved each danger that arose.

XX.

They went their way and left half done
 A matter only just begun,
 And never wholly carried out.
 Yet none could blame them for the deed,
 For none were doubtful of its need ;
 But theirs was greater, past all doubt.

They did the best thing they could do ;
 It proved the very best thing, too.
 And had they now returned and done
 The thing they purposed at the first,
 The same had been a deed accurst,
 And something new beneath the sun.

XXI.

Some toilers once had failed to do
 A certain thing, and lost all heart,
 Until a friend allayed their smart ;
 When one among them bade him go
 Elsewhither ; but he meant not so,
 Nor did that other man depart.

XXII.

A doubly-wounded pilgrim band
 Set out upon a certain day,
 To go into another land,
 With pious offerings in their hand,
 But met with treachery by the way ;
 And seventy perished in that fray.
 Three cities sent the pilgrims forth—
 Three cities lying in the north—
 But in one ditch the dead men lay.

XXIII.

A nation vext with groundless fears,
 Entreated help in this their strait
 Of one renowned above his peers,
 Who liked the plea, beyond debate,
 But made them wait.

At last he came, but helped them none,
 For soon a wondrous thing betid.
 The thing they wished he left undone,
 And what they hated that he did,
 Though sharply chid.

XXIV.

A slave, a prophet, and a king
 Once met to do a rueful thing.

The king was wroth, the prophet sad,
 And mickle fear the servant had.

The monarch proved devoid of grace
 And darker grew the prophet's face.

When all was ended no one stirr'd.
 The prophet never spoke a word.

He heeded not the passers by,
 Nor yet the twain who stood anigh.

The slave said nought ; his liege was dumb ;
 They waited for a fourth to come.

The cruel king had choice of meat
 Before him, but refused to eat.

A subject brought it him that day,
 But had to take it all away.

Then one to whom the thing was known
 Came musing down the road alone.

He filled the office of a friend,
 And brought that meeting to an end.

Back to his halls the monarch went.
The slave departed, well content.

The seer returned the way he came,
And that new-comer did the same.

XXV.

We two alone, supported
By only four at most,
Rose up, unarmed, and thwarted,
The valour of a host.

Our fall was their uprising ;
Our rising was their fall ;
Nor was it deemed surprising
That one prevailed o'er all.

XXVI.

A certain king who thirsted for redress,
Once sent a challenge to a neighbouring foe ;
Thereto emboldened by a late success,
And disregardful of a threatened blow ;
A hireling host had done him heavy wrong,
And should he bear it, being now so strong ?

The challenged man sent back a taunting word ;
And grimly brief were message and reply.
Of what had happened he, indeed, had heard ;
But little troubled, as it seemed, thereby,
Hard things he spake, and bitter, as we read ;
And scorned his foe, and bade the same take heed.

They met in battle, but it ended ill
For him and his. Defeated and undone,
A captive, also, at another's will,
Back to his city he returned anon ;
And ne'er recovered from that heavy blow,
Although he failed not to survive his foe.

XXVII.

A native of the House of Bread,
 Was helped in his distress
 By one who doubted and delayed,
 And marvelled and was much afraid,
 Not knowing of the part he played,
 Whatever he might guess.

And, truly, he had cause to fear,
 Nor was it long time hid ;
 And that kind action cost him dear,
 And all through one who lurked anear,
 And with attentive eye and ear
 Had noted all he did.

XXVIII.

They meant no ill and did no harm ;
 But certain who misread their thought—
 And these were many—in alarm
 Rebuked them ; for the thing seemed fraught
 With deadly ill ; but read aright,
 It seemed well pleasing in their sight.

XXIX.

A man once quarrelled with his friend,
 And seemed resolved to make him smart ;
 But dared not touch him in the end,
 Whate'er he purposed in his heart.
 His hands, well-weaponed, it may be,
 Were holden, but his tongue was free.
 He deemed his friend had much abused
 His friendship ; and moreover reft
 A something from him, and accused
 The same, though wrongly, of the theft ;
 But could not prove it, though he tried.
 And now his friend began to chide.

He charged him with the many things
 He long had suffered at his hands.
 What wonder these had lent him wings?
 Or that he longed to burst his bands?
 But both grew friends again that day,
 And on the morrow went their way.

XXX.

There once was seen a hunted band,
 A cold, and wet, and weary, too ;
 And distant from their native land.
 Their trusted friends had proved untrue ;
 But now, delivered from that crew,
 They cast about, as best they might
 For solace in their piteous plight.

But danger threatens them anew—
 A foe more cunning than the rest
 Starts on a sudden into view,
 And smites their wisest and their best.
 But, nothing daunted or distress,
 He pays but little heed, although
 Unarmed before a well-armed foe.

And nowise troubled by a wound
 That must have proved another's bane ;
 Unholpen, too, of those around,
 Who stand and stare upon the twain ;
 He slays his foe, and all were fain.
 So all goes well, despite their fears.
 Now tell me where the tale appears ?

XXXI.

A godless man once formed a plan ;
 And, aided by his friends,
 Poured out a flood of kindred blood,
 And all for selfish ends.

He gained the throne, he reigned alone,
 And prospered for a time ;
 But God was wroth, and plagued them both,
 So hateful was their crime.

The bad man's folk cast off his yoke,
 But did so to their grief ;
 For vengeance came with sword and flame,
 And scourged them through their chief.

But, pressing on, he met anon
 A most inglorious end ;
 For in the strife he lost his life,
 And partly through a friend.

XXXII.

One to whom the wise deferred,
 And were silent when they heard,
 For his word was as the word
 Of a god,
 Being tempted, went astray,
 Leading many, sad to say,
 In the broad, wide-gated way
 Where he trod.

He was cunning in his sin,
 And he went the way to win ;
 But he prospered not therein,
 Which was well ;
 Being thwarted in his plan
 By a deep-designing man,
 Though he triumphed for a span,
 As befell.

Then he took the way that led
 To the dark land of the dead ;
 For he saw that hope had fled
 Past recall ;

And he did not choose to wait
 For the coming of the fate
 That he reckoned, soon or late,
 Must befall.

XXXIII.

An armed band, compelled to roam,
 Have settled in a novel home.

They keep no flocks, nor till the ground,
 But plunder all the land around.

They reap no harvest of the sword,
 Yet gather in a golden hoard.

But one who lights upon their den,
 Attacks them boldly, there and then ;

Invades their hold ; secures their gains ;
 And leaves them nothing for their pains.

XXXIV.

The twain have left their native land—
 From friends and offspring they have gone—
 At no entreaty or command :

An unseen power impels them on.
 With every motive to abide,
 They take and keep the froward track,
 And tarry not, nor turn aside,
 And nought befalls to turn them back.

XXXV.

A good man made me for the good of men,
 And did much good ; but, honoured past my worth,
 I did much ill, unwittingly, and then
 A good man rose and swept me from the earth.
 He gave me, too, a name before I fell—
 A title of contempt that fitted me right well.

XXXVI.

A man began to fume and fret
 When courteously besought
 To pay some portion of a debt
 That far surpassed his thought.

His creditor, though once his friend,
 Thereon became his foe,
 And vowed revenge ; but in the end
 Was moved to let him go.

XXXVII.

A cast-out pair, condemned to roam
 From friends and home,
 Went journeying on in search of new,
 Still far from view.

Forlorn and lonely, on they went,
 Till one, clean spent,
 Sank down, lamenting, and his cry
 Went up on high.

XXXVIII.

A sick man lay upon his bed ;
 And in a doubtful state,
 Not trusting what the leeches said,
 He wished to know his fate.
 Would his distemper lay him dead ?
 Or leave him soon or late ?

But not a man could point it out,
 Except a neighbouring foe,
 Whose forces he had failed to rout.
 But, being now brought low,
 He prayed the same to solve his doubt,
 Not doubting he would know.

He sent him, too, a noble fee.
 What answer would it bring ?
 He asked not healing, it may be,
 It seemed too great a thing ;
 Or something not for such as he,
 Although he was a king.

Yet, if he had but little faith,
 The boon was not denied.
His sickness was not unto death,
 Yet presently he died.
 What was it that cut short his breath ?
 Or who was it that lied ?

XXXIX.

Gained only after toil and strife,
 By strength of hand, and risk of life ;
 Yet thrown away as soon as won,
 By him for whom the thing was done.

XL.

A good man died, leaving six sons behind.
 To each his portion he assigned ;
 But made the eldest one his heir,
 Who, not contented with his share,
 Turned on his brothers, as we find,
 And slew them all on some vain plea,
 Though each one was a better man than he.

Short space had he wherein to work his will ;
 And yet he wrought a world of ill,
 Thereto incited by his queen,
 As by a single word is seen.
 And so he grew a worse man still,
 And like her sire in days gone by,
 Like whom he sinned, and with a like ally.

He had to wife a dame of high degree,
 One of an evil family ;
 Herself no saint, but by-and-by,
 A murderess of the deepest dye,
 As did her mother, so did she ;
 And worsened as the years went past,
 And justly perished by the sword at last.

Greatly he suffered and in many ways,
 For few and evil were his days.
 Beside the slaughter of his kin,
 He forced the people on to sin,
 And that was little to his praise.
 Swiftly he passed from bad to worse,
 And so was smitten with a heavy curse.

Already had his punishment begun,
 And now a sorer time came on.
 His foes brake in upon his land,
 And sacked his palace. By their hand
 His children perished, all save one,
 Who fell into his father's crime,
 And, like that father, died before his time.

He drained the curse out to the very lees,
 And perished of a sore disease.
 They made for him no funeral fires,
 Nor was he buried with his sires,
 Nor yet lamented as were these.
 Yet, seeing he had worn the crown,
 His folk interred him in the royal town.

XLI.

A brave young man was promised, on a time,
 A higher office than he filled that day ;
 To which he failed not in the end to climb.
 No more then in his own land might he stay,
 But watched from far, with many hopes and fears,
 The ripening harvest of the coming years.

But, not confiding in the promised aid,
 Though all came true, he turned aside ere long,
 And missed an honour of the highest grade ;
 And ne'er repented, whether weak or strong.
 And in the end he perished for his crime,
 A very byword to the end of time.

XLII.

Heavy was the load it bore
 For a very little while ;
 Bright the colour that it wore.
 Never after or before
 Was it handled in such style.

Soon it played another part,
 In a wonderful event.
 Many, in their rage of heart,
 Would have made the owner smart,
 Had they gathered what it meant.

XLIII.

Somewhere, this story have I read :—
 A wretch undone,
 Craved succour, being hard bestead ;
 And that of one
 Who might have often wished him dead.
 And one, too, whom awhile ago
 He might have slain ;
 But other friends had failed, and so
 He now was fain
 To gather what the same could show.
 He sought and found a fallen chief,
 To whom he told
 His trouble, and the tale was brief ;
 And when unrolled,
 Availed him nothing—to his grief.

The man he summoned to his aid,
 Pronounced his doom ;
 And spake, too, of a man who stayed
 To fill his room ;
 And left him horribly afraid.

XLIV.

A prince came limping from a strife wherein
 He claimed the victory he was slow to win,
 Yet bent on winning, though he strove alone,
 And with a force far greater than his own.
 And in the end the other side 'gan fly ;
 But felt no loss that answered to his gain ;
 Nor did his victory give the vanquished pain,
 And he himself was little hurt thereby.

XLV.

A man whom many would have slain,
 And for a less offence,
 Awhile was suffered to remain,
 It may be, in suspense,
 Yet safety ; pardoned, I maintain,
 Not altogether, as is plain,
 But only in a sense.

For when the king died, and his son
 Was reigning in his stead,
 The evil he had said and done
 Returned upon his head :
 A threatened penalty, twice won,
 But such as any man might shun,
 And die upon his bed.

XLVI.

There reigned a mighty lord of old,
 The ruler of a conquering race ;
 A lord of wealth and power untold,
 But vile and base.

He dwelt in more than kingly state,
 Revered and feared by old and young ;
 Stiffnecked, hard-hearted, fixed as fate,
 And not unsung.

They brought a prisoner to his hall ;
 But not to bend the suppliant knee.
 That stranger brought about his fall,
 And did not flee.

But left him bruised, but not with hand ;
 Dejected, humbled, and abased ;
 And went in triumph through his land,
 And laid it waste.

And then passed home with gifts and bribes,
 Unhurt of any, high or low ;
 And feared and honoured by whole tribes,
 And yet their foe.

XLVII.

A captive king, adjudged to die,
 Was once forgiven by his foe,
 Who suffered for it by-and-by,
 But now he weakly let him go ;
 Believing he would make amends,
 And trusting they would now be friends.

He waited, but the same deferred
 To keep his promise ; then he tried
 To make him ; but the same demurred.
 And when, a helper at his side,
 He sought fulfilment of his oath,
 He well-nigh proved the bane of both.

XLVIII.

As a helper of the straitened I arose,
 How I made the strong ones tremble, each one knows.
 Well could I bring down the lofty from their place,
 For I had the warlike temper of my race.

But a hard stroke on a sudden laid me low ;
 And a poor man, then my debtor, dealt the blow.
 Heavy-headed, then I gat me to my bed,
 And in little space was lying cold as lead.
 In a deep grave I was buried out of sight ;
 Covered up, it seemed for ever, from the light.
 Lower than my foes had fallen, now I lay,
 And my fellows could not help me on that day.
 There was grief and lamentation at my fall,
 And the causer of it sorrowed most of all.
 But he found a mighty helper, strong to save,
 And he pitied him, and raised me from the grave.
 Great the joy was, and the wonder all around,
 When once more among the living I was found.

XLIX.

A man who hated strife
 Adventured once his life
 In swift pursuance of a conquering foe ;
 Supported by his friends,
 And for unselfish ends,
 And gained the victory by a sudden blow.

L.

A stranger once addressed a word
 That scarce seemed true,
 To one who doubted when he heard ;
 And thereunto
 Replying, openly demurred.
 He learnt his errand and his aim ;
 With thoughts akin
 To terror, gathered whence he came ;
 But failed to win
 The hidden knowledge of his name.

LI.

There lived a liar once who planned
 To crush the truth, and silence one
 Who dwelt within a far-off land,
 And marred his purpose, fearing none ;
 And hoped to smite him by the hand
 Of others, and to hold his own.

So, in a lordly tone, he wrote,
 To one, a better man, I wis,
 Whose work it was, he said, to note
 And punish madmen like to this
 (Wellnigh his very words I quote) ;
 And wherefore had he been remiss ?

But this man proved a poor ally,
 And read the letter to his foe—
 A man commissioned from on high
 To raise aloft and lay alow—
 Who straightway made a stern reply,
 And doomed him to a double woe.

And soon the bow of God was bent
 Against him, and the arrow sped ;
 Because he prophesied unsent,
 Misleading many whom he led.
 So all the mischief that he meant
 Returned upon his own bad head.

LII.

A soldier drew near to a fortified town—
 A city cast down
 At the fame of the name of a folk of renown.
 And one whom he knew not stood forth in his sight,
 For battle bedight,
 With ready drawn weapon as ready to smite.

But whether a helper, or whether a foe,
 He knew not, and so
 He challenged him boldly, determined to know.
 But speedily finding the mighty unknown
 A prince, though alone,
 He humbled his bearing and altered his tone.

LIII.

A man once asked another's aid
 To do a strange thing he had planned.
 The other, doubtful or afraid,
 Unwisely wise withheld his hand ;
 Not knowing what the man designed,
 Nor wishing to appear unkind.

Denouncing vengeance on his head,
 The first man went upon his way.
 I know not what the other said,
 And what he suffered will not say.
 But something he forbore to do
 Befell him, and a worse thing too.

But soon the first man met with one
 Who rudely gave him what he sought ;
 A strange gift, coveted by none,
 And so, belike, the giver thought.
 Doubtless, at any other time
 He would have reckoned it a crime.

LIV.

Eclipsed and supplanted by him he loved best,
 He sank to his rest
 While the days of the years of his life were but few,
 Bewailed as was due ;
 And leaving a name, and a tale to be told,
 That can never grow old,
 And a void in the heart of his friend, to ascend
 To a place in the world that is world without end.

LV.

There lived and died in troublous times
 A bold bad man of many crimes.
 And this man had, as you may learn,
 A friend of an aspiring turn ;
 Warm-hearted, genial, ardent, prone
 To rage sometimes, but never known
 To injure any : nowise base ;
 The parent of a rising race
 That perished in a little space.
 He had, moreover, in his court
 A helper of a clerkly sort,
 But fit for nothing great or grand—
 A mere tool in the tyrant's hand.

He once beheld, devoid of fear,
 A something from the dead draw near, ,
 To warn him, but his wrath waxed hot
 Against it, for he liked it not.
 And minded, in his rage and spite,
 To do it all the harm he might,
 He gave commandment, and the twain
 Attacked it. Then it writhed amain,
 And twisted like a thing in pain,
 Its form distorted in a strife,
 For very being, not mere life :
 For being dead it could not die.
 And soon it perished utterly.

LVI.

When told to go, they wouldn't stir,
 When told to stay, they went ;
 But started after much demur,
 And failed in their intent.
 They heeded neither rein nor spur,
 And, therefore, they were made to err.

LVII.

A man, attempting to regain
 A something gone beyond recall,
 Was baulked by something, soon his bane,
 Yet little thought of ere his fall ;
 And then, indeed, it seemed too plain.

He deemed himself within his right.
 The way was plain, the pathway clear ;
 The very goal appeared in sight,
 And hearing—he had drawn so near ;
 And yet he failed, as well he might.

LVIII.

They offered him a noble meed,
 As yet enjoyed by none ;
 And all the people were agreed ;
 But he—'twas nobly done—
 Refused the honour, as we read.

He craved a lesser thing instead,
 And gained the boon he sought.
 He meant no harm, and yet it led
 To what he never thought,
 And that or ever he was dead.

The memory of his glorious deed
 Seemed buried with his dust ;
 And failed anon to save his seed
 From treatment most unjust ;
 For no man helped them in their need.

Yet he had battled for this folk
 Against tremendous odds,
 And freed them from a heavy yoke
 That bowed them to the clods ;
 Moved by the angel of the oak.

LIX.

In times unsettled, and remote,
 A man went forth to seek the bread
 He lacked at home, though one of note
 If that be true which some have said,
 Who say his grandsire, who was dead
 Is famed for what he did and wrote.

Howe'er it be, the end is one ;
 And all may reckon that a grief.
 He found a home, nor did he shun,
 Although his stay was nowise brief
 To dwell with a forgiven thief
 Who loved him even as a son.

But now there came a thievish band
 Of weaponed men intent on ill,
 Who plundered all beneath his hand,
 And took him, not against his will,
 Who helped them ; for he looked to fi
 A higher station in the land.

His master followed on their track,
 Aggrieved and angered at the deed.
 But soon a menace sent him back
 With certain who obeyed his lead,
 But dared not help him in his need—
 Finding too many to attack.

LX.

A man whom all must pity,
 Was doomed by God's decree
 To die within a city
 His eyes should never see.
 Now say, ye wise and witty,
 How such a thing could be.

And thitherward he wended,
 Downfallen and undone.
 Weak-minded, and ill-friended,
 His doom he could not shun.
 Was ever reign so ended,
 Or exile so begun ?

O merciless decision !
 O long-remembered sight !
 Upon his anguished vision
 There fell an endless night ;
 And that, amid derision,
 And pitiless despite.

LXI.

A band of men essayed to do
 A kindly deed ; but soon withdrew,
 Confounded, wounded, foiled in aim,
 And crowned with shame.

LXII.

A little band surpassed by none,
 Not half a dozen at the most,
 But terrible in war ; each one
 Picked out and chosen from a host ;
 We yet were never known to boast.
 Although the very first to fall,
 I proved the greatest of them all.

Our lord and master, in his youth
 A captain of unwarlike bands,
 Was little thought of ; yet in sooth
 The same was mighty of his hands ;
 And now is famed throughout all lands ;
 And ready, too, at fight and feast,
 And not afraid of man or beast.

Yet very soon he cast me off,
 And drave me from him in his heat ;
 And that with bitter scorn and scoff,
 And threats for such as I unmeet :
 A sorry guerdon, and unsweet.
 I fled before him, for his blows
 Were often fatal to his foes.

But when I met upon my course
 A man who stayed me in my flight,
 I slew him, and without remorse ;
 Though not possessing half his might ;
 Yet I, too, fell in that same fight,
 Unhelped, though many friends were near.
 So ended my renowned career.

A swift career, full soon cut short ;
 For in my very prime I fell,
 An outcast of a dangerous sort.
 And some there were who liked it well ;
 But there were many sooth to tell,
 Who liked it little, for they knew
 That trouble would anon ensue.

Then, buried roughly and in haste,
 For soon it proved a busy tide,
 Within a strange tomb I was placed—
 A grave not very deep or wide.
 'Twas taken while I lay inside,
 And carried whither no man knows.
 So ends the story of my woes.

LXIII.

A bad man, at another man's request—
 A good man, and his guest—
 Consulted one he hated, though the same
 Was guiltless of all blame ;
 Who spake smooth things, as counselled, and thereby
 Called forth an angry cry ;
 For something in his manner, tone, or look,
 Belied the words he spoke.

LXIV.

He charged her, but he err'd therein,
 Ill-judging, with a shameful crime ;
 And at a time
 When it had been a double sin.

He watched and waited, yet misread,
 And wronged her even by the thought ;
 But knowing nought
 The thing seemed even as he said.

LXV.

Lowborn, like all my family,
 I soon gave signs of lofty worth ;
 Though brought up in obscurity ;
 And full of promise was my birth.
 My father never trod the earth ;
 My mother was of low degree.

Long looked for, I at last appeared,
 A sign and pledge of better things ;
 To save men from a fate they feared,
 And glad the hearts of clowns and kings,
 Whose longing would have lent me wings
 And many were the hearts I cheered.

Clad in a robe of sober hue,
 Sublimely to my work I sped,
 Damping the mirth of not a few ;
 And many in my train I led ;
 And many were the tears I shed
 Before I vanished from men's view.

Yet no man thought the less of me,
 But all the more. My tears fell fast :
 I wept o'er human misery,
 And thus washed out the bitter past.

My weakness strengthened them at last :
My very grief became their glee.

No king e'er wore a grander crown,
Or held a station half so high.
Upon the loftiest I looked down ;
And coldly passed the mightiest by.
Some saw me, and began to fly,
And some were saddened by my frown.

My work was perfected anon—
A goodly work that none could mend.
The self-same power that urged me on,
Sustained me to the very end.
Men hailed me as a welcome friend,
Yet none were sad when I was gone.

LXVI.

A woman who was much to blame,
Was robbed and thwarted in her aim.
So, stricken with a double grief,
No wonder that the angry dame
Bewailed her loss, and cursed the thief.
But when the same confessed his crime,
And wholly of his own accord,
She blessed the man, who then restored,
And that intact, the stolen hoard.
Now this was in the olden time.

LXVII.

A shepherd once obeyed the sheep
He could not keep
Through want of confidence, or skill,
Or courage, or a worse thing still.
And thereby many wandered wide
Who could not guide,
And would not follow, being led :
And not a few anon lay dead.

LXVIII.

There lived in Jewry long ago
 Two greedy shepherds, though the two
 Were scions of a faithful stock.
 And these men kept another's flock ;
 And used it even as they would,
 And that was vilely, unwithstood,
 But not unchid. But nought cared they
 For any, but pursued their way,
 Till both men perished in one day.

LXIX.

Perplexed at what the days might bring,
 And filled with doubt and fear,
 A ruler wished to know a thing
 About his own career ;
 But failed to learn it, though a king,
 From any who were near.
 So to a foreign lord he sent
 To have the thing made plain.
 But one who heard of his intent,
 Resolved to make it vain ;
 And sent him back a message blent
 With anger and disdain.
 He loathed the message and the man,
 And chafed at his reproof ;
 And wished to have him for a span
 Beneath the royal roof.
 The other shrewdly guessed his plan,
 And wisely held aloof.
 He suffered for the thing, and still
 Forbore to let him rest
 Who rose at last and did his will,
 But not at his behest.
 Nor could the monarch do him ill,
 Who thus became his guest.

LXX.

A man who early turned aside
 From wisdom's safe and pleasant way,
 Had once a grief that few could hide ;
 And none could help him though they tried,
 For, doubtless, many made assay.

At last he bade a woman wend,
 Disguised for very shame, to one—
 A hoary prophet, once his friend—
 Who dwelt in darkness, but who kened
 The things that in the light were done.

He knew her errand ere she came ;
 And as she entered at the door
 Reproved her ; and anon the same
 Received a message full of blame,
 Which made her sadder than before.

LXXI.

Rough and ready, and in sooth,
 Rude, unpolished, and uncouth ;
 Chosen for a passing want,
 And thereafter for a witness.
 Though my merit was but scant,
 Yet I had a certain fitness
 For the office that I filled.
 I was privately appointed,
 Raised, established, and anointed,
 Just because another willed.

LXXII.

He sought the help of one who once
 Had helped him greatly, for the nonce ;
 But shunned him now, and still delayed
 To grant the boon for which he prayed.

So after he had asked him twice,
 He hit upon a strange device
 Which brought him quickly to his aid.

LXXIII.

He sought a refuge of renown,
 But found no safety even there ;
 For back again he soon must fare.
 A prisoner, and belike cast down,
 They brought him to the royal town,
 For could a prophet die elsewhere ?
 And there, beneath the tyrant's frown,
 He suffered as the same thought good,
 And sealed his witness with his blood.

LXXIV.

They made their brother's heart to ache,
 Whose trouble made them weep ;
 And made a vow they dared not break,
 Yet did not like to keep ;
 And robbed the guiltless, to bestow
 The plunder on a guilty foe.

LXXV.

He slew his lord and seized the crown,
 Then killed the kinsfolk of the dead,
 That none might live to pluck him down ;
 But others did it in their stead.

Was ever king, before or since,
 That reigned for such a little time ?
 And was there ever king or prince
 So strangely punished for his crime ?

A wicked woman named his name
 To one who followed in his track ;
 But surely he was not to blame,
 Nor did her menace turn him back.

LXXVI.

It lacked a something known to none,
 When first begun ;
 But want of knowledge (so we read)
 Supplied that need.
 It came and went, and gave no hint
 Of stay or stint ;
 But followed them from day to day,
 And never failed them all the way.

LXXVII.

There was once a subject people who essayed to
 break the yoke,
 For they groaned beneath the bondage of a hard
 and warlike folk ;
 Hard they struggled for their freedom, but were
 beaten once again ;
 So they looked for added insult, and a tightening
 of their chain.
 Then they cast about for succour, and they found a
 strong ally ;
 And they moved the same to join them, as in better
 days gone by.
 Now their foes were much disheartened when the
 matter reached their ears ;
 And the mighty hands grew feeble, and the stout
 hearts faint with fears.
 Much they dreaded that new helper, which the
 other folk had won,
 For they thought of old disasters, and they deemed
 themselves undone.

Yet they heartened one another—Should they change
 place with their slaves ?
 Should they show their backs to bondmen and a
 people armed with staves ?
 So the armies dashed together, and the waves of war
 ran high,
 And the earth shook at their conflict, and their
 tumult filled the sky.
 But the subject folk were beaten, though their
 triumph seemed so near ;
 And they fled before their masters, who had cast
 away all fear.
 So they made a mighty slaughter, and they caught
 the very foe
 Whose appearing had so moved them but a little
 while ago.

LXXVIII.

Condemned unjustly from its birth,
 But saved awhile by one who kened
 The danger well, but felt its worth,
 And needs must lose it in the end ;
 Its days began in evil times,
 Fulfilled of many cruel crimes.

Cast forth to perish, like no few,
 And like to die, consigned to one
 Of whose beginning no man knew ;
 Its little day seemed all but done.
 Scant hope had any anywhere
 Of aught committed to his care.

And death, in horrid shapes, drew nigh ;
 And dragons, and unkindly things ;
 But destined in a while to lie
 Within the halls of mightiest kings,
 Unscathed, though helpless, it arose,
 And triumphed over all its foes.

LXXIX.

A hireling army of a king unblest,
 Called forth for service by its lord's behest,
 And then forbidden to have part therein,
 Went back anon, in anger, to its kin,
 Sweeping the country like a very pest.

And in the effort to avenge that wrong,
 His power was broken, though it seemed so strong.
 And yet he erred not when he did the thing
 Which moved those subjects of another king
 To smite his cities as they passed along.

LXXX.

Accused and blamed by one who knew
 The charge was false, for worthy ends ;
 Disgraced and shamed in all men's view ;
 Entrapped and taken—hapless few—
 And far away from home and friends.
 Confounded, they would make amends
 For something they have never done.
 They suffer greatly, and from one
 Who seems resolved to work their fall :
 An easy thing, which seems begun.
 To whom for succour can they call ?
 For who can hope to stay his hand,
 Whom men call second in a land
 Where they are reckoned nought at all ?

LXXXI.

He meant to do another harm,
 And hurt himself, and not his foe ;
 Whose help he craved, in deep alarm,
 And thus recovered from the blow.

LXXXII.

An ill-used man of old essayed
 To save a people much distress ;
 And though his folk were much afraid,
 And murmured, and awhile delayed,
 He saved them and became their guest.

Yet these would soon have brought him low,
 Who raised them up ; though spared the sin,
 And he the sorrow ; for we know
 They basely sided with his foe,
 Who knew the danger he was in.

LXXXIII.

A ceaseless wanderer up and down,
 And seen but seldom, if at all,
 I never entered house or town,
 Nor spoke to any, great or small ;
 Though not unspoken to, nor yet
 Regardless of the folk I met.

Obscure^d by birth, by nature great,
 My very name remains unknown.
 I rose to calm a troubled state ;
 The troubler soon was overthrown,
 And all were glad. But none could share
 The burden I was doomed to bear.

A signal honour now was thrust
 Upon me, and begrudged by none.
 I shirked not, nor abused my trust,
 But gave it up when all was done.
 Then, light of heart, like one set free,
 Sank back into obscurity.

LXXXIV.

I dwelt contented in my home,
 A few short years, secure from ill ;
 Not dreaming I was doomed to roam
 Against my will.

For I was reft away while young ;
 And doubtless others shared my lot—
 Torn from the home to which I clung,
 And ne'er forgot.

So, sundered from my friends and kin,
 I lived, a helpless little thrall,
 Among a heathen folk, and in
 A great man's hall.

And yet I hated not my lord,
 Nor sought avengement of my wrong ;
 Although I gave him his reward,
 And that ere long.

LXXXV.

A city which a cruel folk
 Had once dispeopled at a stroke,
 For not responding to a call,
 Repeopled by the self-same race,
 Was once more in an evil case,
 Though now recovered from its fall.

Hard pressed without, the folk within
 Besought the help of friends and kin
 To save them ere the night came on.
 And there arose a man of might,
 Who saved them and preserved the light
 That else had perished, and anon.

The grateful memory of that deed
 Availed him in his latest need,
 What time his foes had done their worst.

And yet his tribe it was, withal,
Whose crime had ended in the fall
Of that same city at the first.

LXXXVI.

A man once planned a deep disgrace
For one who braved him to his face.
Then, happy in his power and pelf,
Devised fresh honours for himself ;
And thus, not dreaming this was so,
Secured the triumph of his foe.
Was ever downfall and defeat
So little looked for and complete ?
Or such an end to such a plot ?
Or such a double change of lot ?

LXXXVII.

An exiled man, devoid of blame,
Was helped by one—the same 'tis said
As once was baffled in his aim
By him from whom the other fled.
Years went and came, and came and went
His lot became a glorious one ;
And when his helper died, he sent
A kindly message to his son.

LXXXVIII.

They did what seemed a cruel deed,
But not in anger or despite,
Nor yet from any thought of greed.
They did it only in their need,
And so were guiltless in his sight
Who suffered much, and not in vain ;
And great and speedy was their gain.

LXXXIX.

A king once made alliance
 With one who did much ill,
 And that through weak compliance
 With one more wicked still,
 Who bade the laws defiance,
 And ruled the land at will.

Perchance this bad man's daughter
 Was pleasing to his son,
 Who Samson-like had sought her,
 And cared for nought and none ;
 Not minding who had taught her,
 Nor what the same had done.

Or, may be, deep ambition,
 Not all unmixed with greed ;
 Or hope of some great mission,
 To which the same might lead ;
 Or his ally's petition,
 Had led him to the deed.

But mark how ill it ended,
 And how it plagued his land !
 The twain might not be blended,
 Nor singly could they stand.
 And nothing was amended,
 Whatever he had planned.

XC.

Some men were minded once to slay
 A neighbour, since the same alone
 Had bought his safety in a way
 That seemed a menace to their own ;
 Which seemed a selfish thing to do,
 A treacherous and a mean thing, too,
 And something thitherto unknown.

They fell upon him—five to one ;
 And all at once. Success seemed clear.
 He stood alone, and seemed undone ;
 And so they judged till help drew near.
 Then, pressed in turn, they turned and fled,
 With death behind them and o'erhead,
 And kept together in their fear.

They came to an obscure abode,
 And hid together in the gloom—
 A sorry covert, as they trowed.
 There, quaking, they abode their doom.
 Their shelter soon became a snare,
 And then a prison nowise fair,
 And soon it served them for a tomb.

XCI.

The better thus to gain his ends,
 A man once made a foolish oath,
 And foiled himself, and vexed his friends,
 And helped his foes—the foes of both.

XCII.

Of two things he had choice to do,
 He chose what seemed the wiser one,
 And many others thought so, too ;
 But all went ill ere all was done.
 For as he journeyed on his way,
 He met with damage and delay.

And so, with something of remorse,
 He thought upon a slighted word,
 For had he only changed his course,
 This trouble never had occurred.
 But this man suffered not alone,
 Nor was the error all his own.

XCIII.

A strong young man, but newly come
 To honour which had come unsought,
 Was slighted and contemned by some,
 Who gave rude utterance to their thought.
 And yet he heeded not the slight,
 Although he noted what they said ;
 And when his power was at its height,
 And certain wished to have them dead,
 Their lives were precious in his sight.

XCIV.

A few poor men in direst want
 Went forth upon a dangerous quest.
 Their fears were great, their hopes were scant,
 And they themselves a folk unblest,
 And feeble—even at their best.

But very death was at their door,
 And so they started on their way,
 With death behind them and before.
 And though they seemed an easy prey,
 They prospered, and without delay.

XCV.

He found it lying on the ground,
 And picked it up and went his way,
 And meeting one that bade him stay,
 He seized the something he had found,
 And dealt therewith a mightier blow
 Than ever warrior gave his foe,
 Though only one perceived the wound.

XCVI.

Once of old an angry wight
 Wrought a wrong with all his might,
 Pouring out a flood of spite

On a man
 Who was hateful in his sight,
 For the darkening of the light
 ~ Of his clan.

But the other, though ill-used,
 Cursed, insulted, and abused,
 As upon the thing he mused,

In some sort
 Held his enemy excused,
 And he utterly refused
 To retort.

XCVII.

Once a brother of a brother
 Craved a favour nowise great,
 But much needed ; yet the other
 Sent him empty from his gate.

Well he knew the thing was wanted,
 Yet he roughly answered, No !
 If you take the thing ungranted,
 I will treat you as my foe.

But his brother still entreated—
 He intended no offence ;
 Yet his answer he repeated,
 And prepared to drive him thence.

Disappointed, heavy-hearted,
 Unbefriended in his need,
 From his gates the same departed.
 But he ne'er forgot the deed.

They were children of one mother,
 And had quarrelled once before,
 Being much unlike each other;
 And they vexed each other sore.

Each to each a near abider,
 Proved a foe and not a friend ;
 So the breach grew ever wider,
 And continued to the end.

XCVIII.

He was yet a little child
 When he fled
 From a region all defiled
 With its dead ;
 From a graveyard heaped and piled,
 Doubly red.
 Red by name and with the blood
 Of its sons,
 Who had perished, bloom and bud,
 Hapless ones !
 He was caught away and carried,
 In amaze,
 To a strange land, where he tarried
 Many days.
 But at last a welcome message
 Reached his ears ;
 He had waited for that presage
 Through long years.
 They were dead who wrought the slaughter
 They had planned ;
 When the blood of men like water
 Drenched the land.
 Though his lot was nowise meagre,
 Yet anon,
 Ill at ease he grew, and eager
 To be gone.

In his own land, not another,
 He would dwell,
 Though the king, who was his brother,
 Loved him well.
 So he left him and departed
 To his own—
 To a people heavy-hearted,
 And a kingdom overthrown.

XCIX.

Some men were bent upon a crime,
 But one, although they knew it not,
 Had only joined them for a time,
 The better thus to wreck their plot,
 And better thus another's lot.

The same proposed another plan,
 And all the rest agreed thereto,
 But changed their purpose, in a span :
 And when the other came to know,
 He knew not whither he should go.

C.

Long ago a certain people from a region of renown,
 Settled in a pleasant valley, where they built a little
 town.

Here they lived in peace and plenty, from the noisy
 world shut out ;

Calm and careless, and regardless of the nations
 round about.

But their peace was rudely broken, for there came
 a prying band,

Seeking for a home to dwell in as they journeyed
 through the land.

These beheld the happy valley, and they saw the
 land was good ;

For there seemed a lack of nothing, and the folk
 did as they would.

Back they went to those who sent them—folk
 abiding in the south ;
 And they told them of that valley, and they praised
 it with one mouth.
 Then uprose the folk who heard them. Seeing
 that they needs must roam,
 They would seek that happy valley—could they
 find a better home ?
 So they started with their households, and they
 came at last thereto.
 And they smote the quiet city, and the peaceful
 folk they slew.
 For they dwelt secure and careless, and were taken
 unawares.
 Thus they seized the happy valley, and the pleasant
 land was theirs.
 And they built a place to dwell in, for they burnt
 the former town ;
 And the same became a city, and a landmark of
 renown.

CI.

A thief, detected in a theft,
 Received no blame, but rather praise,
 From him who suffered, thus bereft
 Of something in the public ways—
 A robbery hidden from their gaze,
 Who, seeing, saw not, but were stirred
 With unfeigned wonder when they heard.

CII.

He risked his life to save his lord,
 And sought the friendship of his foe,
 Who knew not of the strict accord
 Which still prevailed between the two,
 And haply never came to know.

For full of undiscovered guile
 This other who appeared his friend,
 Was bent on mischief all the while—
 A dangerous business as he kened ;
 And wrought his downfall in the end.

CIII.

A nation that had seized the land
 And cities of a neighbouring race,
 Attacked in turn by one who planned
 A wider conquest, soon gave place
 To this new-comer—forced to yield—
 Though long time they had kept the field.

Peace followed, and the land had rest ;
 And ages passed. And now the same,
 Whose loss had rankled in their breast
 Through all the years, revived their claim ;
 Deeming that region still their own,
 After whole centuries now had flown.

The conqueror made a meet response,
 And counselled peace ; but as his foe
 Refused to hearken, rose at once,
 And dealt the same a crushing blow ;
 And left him, humbled and distressed.
 And once again the land had rest.

CIV.

A man once did a generous deed,
 Sheltering a foeman in his need,
 Though of another race and creed.

He made the same an honoured guest,
 Whom none dared harass or molest ;
 And gave him largely of his best.

The days went by, their friendship grew :
 He reckoned he should never rue
 His confidence in one so true.

And yet the man he deemed so just
 Deceived him, and betrayed his trust,
 Soiling his honour in the dust.

CV.

A base-born but a worthy wight,
 Cast out unkindly, took to flight,
 Although no coward, and became
 The captain of a desperate crew ;
 And somewhat like to these he grew,
 And they to him : and yet the same
 Was found a worthier than his foes,
 As these discovered ere the close.

CVI.

A man whose greed surpassed his wit,
 As all admit,
 Demanded something from his foe—
 A man brought low—
 Who granted it, whereon the same
 Increased his claim,
 And deemed it all within his clutch ;
 But asked too much,
 And so got nothing ; nay, it led
 To loss instead.

CVII.

They met together with intent
 To do a thing they failed to do
 Through lack of wisdom ; for they meant
 To help a brother bowed and bent
 With sorrow, and assuage his rue ;
 But somehow added more thereto.

CVIII.

A kingless folk received command,
 And kept the mandate as was meet,
 And brought their plunder, out of hand,
 And laid it at another's feet.

They never did the thing before,
 And never did it any more ;
 Their strength was little, like their lore,
 And sombre were the robes they wore.

CIX.

A man who played a double part
 Through fear of man, was sharply chid
 By one whose singleness of heart
 Was plain to all in all he did.
 He chid him, and before them all,
 Nor fearing any, great or small.

CX.

A man once tried to right a wrong,
 But failed ere long,
 Finding his enemies too strong.

His friends were hopeless, and afraid
 To lend their aid ;
 He seemed distrusted and betrayed.

He fled elsewhither in despair,
 And dwelt elsewhere ;
 But did the same thing even there.

He helped the feeble to their right,
 Like some good knight,
 And found acceptance in their sight

CXI.

Within a city none could save—
 A city tottering to its fall—
 There lived of old a kindly slave,
 Who served a king whose power was small,
 And crushed for ever, in a span.

And this man saved a greater man,
 And one by many foes begirt.
 The city fell. A bitter cry
 Went up from many doomed to die,
 But he for one escaped unhurt.

CXII.

A man who started on his way
 Upon a matter not unknown,
 Was charged with hastening its decay
 Whose ruin he had sought to stay,
 But might not, being all alone.

CXIII.

He saw his chance was very small,
 And straightway he devised a plan
 To gain his end in spite of all.
 And in the issue, happy man !
 He fared better than the rest,
 And reckoned he was highly blest ;
 But many murmured and repined,
 Nor liking any of his kind.

CXIV.

A lonely traveller once set out,
 But knew not whither he should go ;
 And faltered, and was filled with doubt,

And vainly wandered to and fro ;
 And oftentimes he turned about,
 And looked around him and below.

The way was clear, but not the goal ;
 The pathway plain, but not the end.
 He feared and shunned the kind control
 Of one who once had been his friend,
 And held aloof ; and not a soul
 Could tell him whither he should wend.

CXV.

He hailed him as his country's foe,
 But, doing so,
 He charged him with his own offence ;
 Misdeeming, for the same, although
 He seemed so in a certain sense,
 Was no-wise guilty, as we know.

CXVI.

A mighty man of little faith
 Was told to do a dangerous thing ;
 And did it, as the story saith,
 But waited till the day took wing ;
 There being many to his few
 Who might be angry when they knew.

CXVII.

They hung together, row on row,
 A goodly show ;
 Or glittered, sunlike, in the sun,
 The work of one ;
 The boast of some, the praise of all,
 Both great and small ;
 And far and wide
 Their fame went forth on every side.

CXVIII.

A man turns homewards from a bootless quest.
 His hands are empty, but his heart is full.
 And novel fears are trembling in his breast,
 And bright new hopes that nothing yet can dull.
 An altered man, upon his way he goes,
 In deep amaze, revolving many things—
 The rise of kingdoms, and the fall of kings,
 But nought thereof to anyone he shows.

CXIX.

A man was minded once to know
 The measure of his worth ;
 And certain men esteemed it low,
 And little at the most, although
 He filled the highest place on earth ;
 Seeing the very sum they gave,
 Was but the value of a slave.

CXX.

Three things existed long ago,
 Bearing a common name, although
 Not much in common could they show.

They rose, the work of different hands,
 At different times, in different lands ;
 The greater by divine commands.

The first rose slowly year by year ;
 The second held a thing most dear ;
 The third was fenced about with fear.

The largest was the first to rise ;
 The second was the least in size ;
 The third most glorious in men's eyes

The first saved many, being great,
 The second, one—condemned by hate,
 The third one shortened some men's date

CXXI.

In-anguish and privation
 He gathered what he sowed.
 More than a generation
 Unsolaced he abode
 Where stillness and stagnation
 Make life a weary load.

At last, when old and hoary,
 His hopes, belike, long dead,
 One came who knew his story,
 And lifted up his head ;
 And crowned it with a glory
 That seemed for ever fled.

So, raised aloft and seated
 Among the rich and great,
 With greater honour treated
 Than men of like estate,
 His exile he completed ;
 Yet piteous was his fate.

CXXII.

The slave of another,
 Though mighty to slay,
 I aided this other
 Till helpless he lay ;

Then turned on my master,
 And slew him outright ;
 A dreadful disaster,
 Beheld with affright.

Thereafter I tarried
 A while with his foe,
 By whom I was carried
 In triumph, I know.

'Twas he who beheld me
 What time I lay hid ;
 'Twas he who compelled me
 To do what I did.

When all was completed,
 Not ill did I fare,
 Well lodged and well treated,
 But guarded with care.

My work now seemed ended
 To him and to all ;
 Nor was I intended
 To come at his call.

Albeit he found me
 Where captive I lay ;
 And having unbound me,
 He bore me away.

CXXIII.

She sojourned in the midst of foes,
 Amid the remnant of her race,
 With one brief respite, till the close ;
 A willing captive in a place
 That seemed a prison, though designed
 To be the refuge of her kind

CXXIU.

Unbrotherly Edom, who lived by the sword,
 And Moab the proud, and the greedy for prey,
 And Ammon the cruel—so like to his lord—
 Were gathered together, a dreadful array—
 All armed for the fray.

And great was the fear of the folk they abhorred,
 And banded together to plunder and slay,
 Whose only defence was the arm of their Lord,
 And this was made bare for their help in that day
 Of grief and dismay.

Their foes are confounded. The gods they adored
 Have greatly deceived them, and led them astray
 Their armies have perished, self-slain, for the Lord
 Has dashed them together like vessels of clay,
 And swept them away.

CXXV.

With hope before, and fear behind,
 They started forth, nor failed to find
 The very thing for which they pined.

Their number being now but four,
 A shadow falls upon their floor :
 One leaves them to return no more.

The days roll on. Their tears are dried.
 Two others join them—each a bride ;
 And two are taken from their side.

One rises to return ; nor slack
 Are two to follow. One turns back.
 Two only keep the outward track.

CXXVI.

A sire appoints a son to fill
 An office which he holds until
 A stranger enters at the door.
 A change ensues—'tis quickly done,
 The stranger then supplants the son,
 Of whom the story speaks no more.

The sire is glad, for "Now," saith he,
 "I know it shall be well with me."

But soon the fine gold turns to dross :
 He trusts a reed that breaks anon,
 And wounds the hand that leans thereon ;
 And loudly he laments his loss.

CXXVII.

A nail was fastened in a wall,
 And firmly, as it seemed to all ;
 And thereon many things were hung.
 But though the wall to which it clung
 Was stable, and survived the fall,
 It fell with all the load it bore,
 Downsmitten, and arose no more.

CXXVIII.

A great one, in a generous mood,
 Received an alien as his guest,
 And gave him shelter, clothes, and food,
 Nor spared to give him of his best.
 He also gave him of the wealth he had,
 And freely ; and the same was glad.
 So, set above the reach of wrong,
 He prospered, who had feared the worst
 What marvel if the same grew strong,
 Although but feeble at the first ;
 Or that the old home should be half forgot,
 When change had bettered thus his lot.
 But, grown distrustful and unkind,
 His friend at length became his foe.
 And now, a beaten slave, he pined,
 Who once was free to come and go ;
 Ill-used by one who feared him, as is plain,
 Yet kept him for the sake of gain.

And many toilful years went by
 Ere one rose up to right his wrong ;
 For who, if any heard his cry,
 Durst meddle with a foe so strong,
 Who feared not any, being rich and bold
 And first among the great of old ?

CXXIX.

The place was small, the people few ;
 Their strength was little, as they knew.

A mighty host appears anon ;
 A mighty monarch leads them on.

The straitness of the siege is felt ;
 They cannot break the living belt.

Their strength is lessened day by day ;
 They scarce can hold the foe at bay.

Their friends are feeble, few, or far ;
 And dare not meddle in the war.

And now a needy man arose,
 And saved the people from their foes.

State how the city crowned her son,
 And name the guerdon that he won.

CXXX.

An uncouth race, devoid of grace,
 And yet despised by none ;
 Condemned, and yet to nothing base,
 Not thus had they begun ;
 Nor did they fill a lowly place
 For aught that they had done.

Still borne about the lands of drought,
 They journey to and fro ;

Cut off, and that on every side,
 Diminished and brought low,
 In hopeless bondage they abide
 Wherever they may go.

CXXXI.

Thy grave is hollowed in the rock—
 A tomb fair-shapen and on high.
 And there—no outcast from the flock—
 Thou thinkest at the last to lie ;
 Yet in a strange land shalt thou die
 And there, too, shall they bury thee
 This is the ripe fruit of thy tree.

CXXXII.

Unwisely, of his own accord,
 He vowed a vow—a hapless word
 That many would have broken.
 And he himself awhile delayed
 To keep the promise he had made,
 And often wished unspoken.

CXXXIII.

A girl went forth to help a king,
 A thing that many durst not do.
 And when a boy perceived the thing,
 He started forth to aid his foe.
 The girl is loyal, but the boy
 A traitor in the foe's employ.

Unaided and alone they went,
 And each in haste for good and ill.
 The boy appeared to go unsent,
 The girl obeyed another's will.
 The purpose of the boy is crossed,
 The girl succeeds, though all seems lost.

CXXXIV.

A raven and a wolf—the twain
 Fit leaders of a ravenous crew—
 Once met together, but in vain,
 To do such things as such things do.
 So homewards in amaze they flew ;
 Yet came not thither, being slain ;
 But left their names, the records tell,
 To mark the places where they fell.

CXXXV.

He sought to hinder one
 Who could not brook delay,
 And counselled him to shun
 The peril of the fray ;
 Not being minded to forego
 His purpose, or become his foe.
 He feared not, for anon
 He hoped to turn him back.
 And so the same passed on,
 And swept him from his track.
 Then grief was heard on every hand,
 And wailing over all the land.

CXXXVI.

They had only hoped for bread,
 And they find a banquet spread.
 They were poorest of the poor,
 Now they cannot wish for more.
 Even death was in their fears,
 And a better life is theirs.
 They are safe from all attack,
 One thing only now they lack.

CXXXVII.

Two men are seated face to face,
 Divided by a little space,
 With others who await their word.
 And when, anon, the same is heard,
 Twelve armed men on either side
 At once leap up upon their feet,
 And quit their comrades, who abide ;
 And midway from the twain they meet,
 And strive together, watched by all,
 Who join the battle when they fall.

CXXXVIII.

Though mightily befriended
 When trouble once arose,
 By one who still intended
 To shield him to the close,
 When danger next assailed him,
 He sought another's aid,
 As if the first had failed him,
 And thus was he repaid.
 His wisdom clean forsook him,
 Who once had seemed so wise.
 To others he betook him,
 And trusted in allies.
 So peace forsook his border,
 And health returned no more ;
 And discord and disorder
 Have entered at the door.

CXXXIX.

There sits within a place renowned
 As weak a king as e'er was crowned ;
 A ruler ruled by those around.
 Without, the foe is gaining ground,
 Within, no succour can be found.

In vain the sages say their say ;
 In vain the mighty seek the fray ;
 They do but hold a foe at bay
 Who in the end will make them pay
 The heavier for the brief delay.

Faint-hearted, feeble, and unwise,
 He knows the truth, yet trusts in lies.
 The city falls. The darkened skies
 Afford him what the day denies ;
 And eastward through the night he flies.

CXL.

Some men once found a treasure
 They cared not to possess ;
 And marvelling beyond measure,
 Its meaning none could guess.
 And little was their pleasure,
 And great was their distress.

CXLI.

He came with no unfriendly aim,
 Yet did some damage when he came.
 And when the matter reached their ears
 It filled them with ignoble fears.
 They feared his power, misjudged his mood,
 And prayed against the proffered good.
 Yet one among them knew his worth,
 And strove to set the matter forth.
 Now all with one consenting voice
 Upbraid them and condemn their choice.

CXLI.

Two men once made a league with one,
 And kept it till he died.
 Then, caring nothing for his son,
 They set the same aside.
 They hated him beyond a doubt,
 And envied him, and thrust him out.

But soon, as once before they came,
 The Captain and the King
 Appeared, and with a friendly aim,
 To seek the self-same thing.
 They saw the folly they had wrought,
 And owned the error of their thought.

CXLIII.

Their task was hopeless from the first,
 As well he knew who knew the worst,
 Yet gave the vain command ;
 But not to them, till all was done ;
 For hopeful doubts impelled them on,
 A fondly foolish band.

CXLIV.

Unstayed by friends, unchecked by foes,
 In silence on his way he goes,
 Not heeding any, by command.
 Regardless of the dust and heat,
 He fares along upon his feet,
 And bears a something in his hand.
 A woman follows in his wake
 In silent sorrow. For her sake
 A great man follows in her sight ;
 Who, too, is silent as he fares,
 Deep-thoughted and oppressed with cares,
 Though not unmindful of her plight.

CXLV.

Two men once brought a gift they thought
 Would please another's eye.
 But he was wroth, and swore an oath,
 And doomed them both to die ;
 Whereas the twain had hoped to gain
 A great reward thereby.

CXLVI.

What he sought he never found,
 Though he searched the country round.
 What he found he never sought,
 So it never cost him aught.
 Lightly now his loss he bore,
 Nay, it troubled him no more.
 But his gain, beyond debate,
 Wholly altered his estate.

CXLVII.

Who thought to rise and justly fell ?
 And having much was bent on more ;
 And missed it, as the records tell,
 And added nothing to his store ;
 But suffered, being stript as well
 Of much that he possessed before ;
 Cut off, in judgment, and consigned
 To hopeless exile from his kind ?

CXLVIII.

An army once went forth
 Against a mighty foe ;
 An army from the north,
 With sword, and spear, and bow ;
 But wholly failed in their intent,
 And came back empty, as they went.
 For when the foe was found,
 And seemed within their grip—
 Encompassed all around—
 They needs must let him slip.
 Amazed, they know not what to do :
 They cannot cope with such a foe.
 Though men of mickle might,
 Not one of that array
 Is now prepared to fight,
 Nor fit to run away.
 They stay and go at his command,
 Their lives are wholly in his hand.

CXLIX.

An honour was offered
 To one who declined
 The thing that was proffered,
 For reasons assigned ;
 And therefore he suffered—
 The fate of his kind.

And nowise transgressing,
 He chose the reverse
 (The choice was distressing,
 But might have been worse),
 And turned from a blessing,
 And sued for a curse.

CL.

Sprung from a valiant stock, whose name
 Received fresh lustre from my fame,
 I slew two lions and a king ;
 And battling with a warrior bold,
 O'erthrew him, though without a sling,
 And plucked the weapon from his hold,
 And slew him with the deadly thing.
 And so my name is now enrolled
 Among the mighty names of old.

CLI.

A man who owed his life to one
 Who saved him in an evil time,
 Turned round at last and slew her son,
 Because the same condemned his crime.
 And therefore he was doomed to die,
 And soon was numbered with the dead.
 And vengeance, plainly from on high,
 Descended on the folk he led.

CLII.

Despised and insulted by short-sighted men,
 He deemed it no wisdom to answer them then
 Not caring, howe'er he might inwardly chafe,
 To promise or threaten, he bided his time.
 It came ; and revenge was both easy and safe,
 For many were eager to punish their crime.
 And yet he forgave them and reckoned with
 none ;
 And this was his answer—the deed he had done.

CLIII.

No father ever called him son,
 No mother ever gave him birth ;
 Forefathers, therefore, had he none,
 Nor left he any seed on earth.
 No home had he, nor friends, nor kin,
 Nor any who would take him in.
 His garb and speech sufficed to show
 For whom he came. No mortal eye
 Beheld him come or saw him go ;
 No ear e'er listened to his cry ;
 Yet one man saw him ere he passed,
 And heard him, and was not aghast.
 Of mortal mould, but deathless fame,
 He sought a something for his race—
 A boon which he to whom he came
 Accorded in a little space ;
 And neither doubted nor deferred,
 Though dumbly he received the word.
 He came unasked, and passed anon,
 But went nowhither. Never more
 Came he to any, being gone,
 Nor left he trace on any shore.
 He lives not, neither is he dead,
 Nor rose there any in his stead.

CLIV.

Upon a message I was sent
 By one who haply never knew,
 Though certain of his own intent,
 To whom or whither now I went,
 But this he knew—that I was bent
 On mischief when I passed from view.
 Sad was the message I conveyed
 To many, but to one in chief;
 With whom a while at least I stayed.
 I ne'er returned, though undismayed,
 To him whose bidding I obeyed—
 The simple author of his grief.

CLV.

They ask and have : their will is done :
 They find the very thing they sought ;
 And all goes well. And when, anon,
 A great deliverance has been wrought,
 Where seems the error of their thought ?
 Their cause has triumphed ; yet a voice
 Reproves them, and condemns their choice.

CLVI.

There lived a brother who surpassed the rest
 In wealth and strength—so mighty had he
 grown ;
 The thought whereof was ever in his breast :
 He deemed no worth was equal to his own.
 Self-willed he was, and haughty, being strong ;
 And quick to quarrel, whether right or wrong.
 But past all bearing in the end he grew—
 So vain he was and jealous of his kin ;
 And on himself a heavy stroke he drew,
 And found not one to succour him therein ;
 Yet rose again, unbettered by his fall,
 To claim the headship and the lead of all.

And meanly envious of another's good,
 He joined with others and became their chief,
 To vex a brother whom he long withstood—
 A life-long quarrel and a mighty grief.
 And in his hatred—he had sunk so low—
 He made alliance with his direst foe.
 He turned to idols, and forsook them not ;
 Also he grew a votary of the vine.
 And now his tables—such the reveller's lot—
 Were full of vomit and the spilth of wine.
 Worthless he grew, and rotten to the core ;
 And fell unpitied, and arose no more.

CLVII.

A man led forth a household band
 To go into another land,
 But halted somewhere on the road,
 And there abode
 Until his travelling days were done ;
 And then his son,
 A nobler and a greater man,
 Completed what the sire began.

CLVIII.

He rosé and left a doleful place,
 But not for good ; and face to face
 He met the troubler of his race.
 His foes were many, vile and strong.
 He stood alone amid the throng,
 And suffered, though he did no wrong.
 He stood unaided by a third,
 Who might have saved him by a word,
 And yet the same was never heard.

CLIX.

A robber of the days of old,
 A thief, but not of goods or gold,
 No plunderer of the midnight fold.

He wrought by day and not by night ;
 And all alone, in all men's sight ;
 And robbed another of his right.
 No hunger-bitten thief was he ;
 But wealthy, and of high degree ;
 And smooth of tongue, and fair to see.
 He wrought unchecked, and throve apace
 On stolen wealth, a little space ;
 Then came discovery and disgrace.

CLX.

An angry word spoken ;
 A quarrel begun ;
 A friendship is broken ;
 A kingdom undone.
 The kinsmen have parted ;
 The oath has been sworn.
 The one is hot-hearted,
 The other forlorn.
 The breach waxes wider
 That severs the twain,
 But death the divider
 Shall join them again.

CLXI.

Who, needing nothing, wanted more,
 And stole a thing that made them poor ?
 And aiming at a higher rank,
 Aspired to rise but only sank ?
 And did a thing they wished undone
 Before the setting of the sun ?

CLXII.

A wealthy nation once beheld its land
 O'errun by foes, unnumbered as the sand—
 Host upon host—too many to withstand.

Their names were diverse, but their aim was one ;
 And this they gained, discomfited by none :
 The land was taken, and the folk undone.

Vain was the valour of the man of might,
 The wise man's wisdom, and the cunning sleight,
 The mad endeavour, and the priestly rite.

The torment passed : the groaning land was freed ;
 But spoiled and wasted by the conqueror's greed,
 Not soon it lost the memory of their deed.

CLXIII.

A goodly gift was offered
 To one who took, when pressed,
 A part of what was proffered,
 And gave his foes the rest.
 So many a sad disaster
 O'ertook him, wave on wave,
 Who might have been a master,
 But chose to be a slave.

CLXIV.

A captive host, their kinsmen slain,
 Drew near the conquering foe's domain,
 In hunger, nakedness, and pain ;
 Reviled and treated with disdain.
 Cold fears within their breasts arose :
 They feared an increase of their woes,
 And looked for added bonds and blows ;
 For who could hinder or oppose ?
 But, lo ! a wondrous thing betid—
 Their captors, not themselves, were chid :
 Men blamed them for the thing they did ;
 And what they purposed they forbid.
 And certain men of high degree
 Came forth and set the captives free,
 Who now are glad as well may be.
 Their own land they again shall see.

So home again, their wants supplied,
 They all shall go—a joyful tide,—
 With friends and helpers at their side ;
 And those who cannot walk shall ride.

CLXV.

A mighty famine once prevailed,
 But few were troubled, or bewailed
 The dreadful drought, the awful dearth,
 Their sin had brought upon the land ;
 Nor did they seek beyond its girth
 The food they lacked on every hand.
 The famished folk appeared content ;
 And when at last relief was sent,
 Received it in a mournful mood,
 So very bitter seemed the food.
 And some were troubled who before
 Were heedless of an empty store.

CLXVI.

A traveller in the days of yore,
 When wending once upon his way,
 Was met by some and wounded sore,
 And plundered of a secret store
 That none had ever seen before,
 Then left unheeded where he lay.
 They went their way, and made their boast ;
 He ne'er recovered what he lost ;
 But after he was whole and strong
 He wended whither he was bent,
 And murmured ever as he went,
 Although the same had done no wrong.

CLXVII.

The Lion of God has gone forth in his might,
 The prey in his sight.
 Urged on and emboldened by hunger he goes ;
 And who shall oppose ?
 Alas for the fold that must furnish the feast
 Of the man-eating beast !

Full-fed he returns : from the slaughter and sack
 They welcome him back.
 The danger is over : the deed has been done,
 The risk has been run.
 And sweet is the guerdon the spoiler has won.

CLXVIII.

A guest rejected by a king
 Who knew not what the same might bring,
 Found shelter with an humbler man,
 Who feared, it may be, like the rest ;
 But found within a little span
 He entertained a heaven-sent guest,
 And prospered and was greatly blest.

CLXIX.

A pilgrim long ago,
 Opprest with grief and age,
 And wanderings to and fro,
 Drew near the final stage.
 But lo ! a joyful sound has come
 To cheer him in the gathering gloom.
 He doubted when he heard—
 It seemed beyond belief.
 He trusted not a word
 That only roused his grief ;
 Yet plucked up heart and heard them out.
 And gathered how it came about.
 And now the truth appears—
 He trusts with glad surprise
 The hearing of his ears,
 The witness of his eyes.
 He thought but of the deepening night,
 And lo ! at evening there is light.

CLXX.

Who guarded once a treasure
 That no man cared to steal ;

And found therein such pleasure
 As only such can feel
 Who love beyond all measure,
 And that through woe and weal ?

CLXXI.

A strong man once began a strife
 That ended in his own defeat ;
 And quenched it rudely with the life
 Of one who troubled his retreat.

CLXXII.

The folds of the serpent encircle them round :
 Escape there is none ; and they send forth a cry ;
 And the hearts of the people are moved at the
 sound
 As the trees of the wood when the tempest goes
 by ;
 But who can reply ?
 Then one who in courage surpasses the rest,
 Sublime in his anger starts up to defend
 The succourless folk from that terrible pest ;
 And the jackals come forth, and the vultures
 descend ;
 And this is its end.

CLXXIII.

Though suffering from a loss incurred
 In helping others, undeterred
 By past experience, still he chose
 To shield the feeble from their foes,
 And save the helpless weak from wrong,
 And plead their cause against the strong.

CLXXIV.

Cut off, but not destroyed,
 I played no common part,
 Appointed and employed
 To help a doubting heart,

And strengthen one too full of fears
To trust the hearing of his ears.

With plenty I was crowned,
But all alone I stood.

When plenty reigned around
I lacked the common good.

He saw it, and with glad surprise
Believed the witness of his eyes.

CLXXV.

In love and peace the three abode,
And how their hearts within them glowed,
What time another shared their lot ;
Who left them once, and in his place
There came another, void of grace,
And though familiar with his face,
They liked it not.

They needed him beneath their roof
Who loved them, but he held aloof,
Till one departed, in whose track
They feared to follow ; and they kenned
That few retraced it. But their friend
Rejoined them in the happy end,
And brought him back.

CLXXVI.

Two enter : six issue : two turn back anon :
The others pass on.

One turns, but returns not, nor follows the three.
Say, who can they be ?

CLXXVII.

Vain was the sire's example,
And great things he had done ;
And warning too, though ample,
To check the froward son.

O sight most melancholy !
 Was ever man so blind,
 So piteous in his folly,
 So brutish in his mind ?

Assaulted and defeated,
 And that on every side,
 Their succour he entreated
 Who heard not when he cried.
 So in despair—now note him—
 Increasing thus his woes,
He turned to those who smote him,
 And sided with his foes.

CLXXVIII.

He could not fight against such odds,
 But fled away forthright ;
 And hurried past the graven gods,
 Who hindered not his flight ;
 Then seized a horn, though faint and worn,
 And blew with all his might.

CLXXIX.

A man who had a strange complaint
 Was lying on his bed ;
 But did not keep it by constraint,
 Nor out of guile or dread.
 His heart was sick, his hopes were faint,
 And heavy was his head.

Awhile he lay, too sick for speech,
 Yet nowise like to die ;
 The remedy beyond his reach,
 Although the same lay nigh.
 But soon there came a wicked leech
 Who healed him by and by.

CLXXX.

A princess once became the wife
 Of one who did much good,
 A kingly man in peace and strife,
 Though not of royal blood.
 The pillar of the state gave way,
 And then, within a span,
 A change befel, and nought could stay
 The ruin that began.
 But, seeing he had done such things,
 They buried him among the kings.

CLXXXI.

Two churls who begrudged him the little he had,
 And would have been glad
 To strip him of all, though he did them no wrong.
 He bore with them long,
 And hated them both who were both of his kin ;
 And deemed it no sin.
 The elder was cunning, but could not succeed ;
 And great was his greed.
 The younger was grasping and cruel withal,
 And sore was his fall.
 Lo ! these were his neighbours, consider the same,
 And tell me his name.

CLXXXII.

It journeyed whither they were bent,
 But helped them not upon the road ;
 It also went whene'er they went,
 And when they tarried it abode.
 The way was long, the path beset
 By perils they could ne'er forget ;
 But safely through them all it passed,
 And reached a quiet home at last.

CLXXXIII.

I stopped in my career,
 And then retraced my way ;
 But not through doubt or fear,
 And not for praise or pay ;
 Then turned again to turn no more,
 Though oft returning as before.

CLXXXIV.

A burdened burden at the best,
 He came not as the others came ;
 Nor did he enter like the rest
 Who entered with another aim.
 But now he issues, scarce the same ;
 No longer burdened and distressed,
 But doubly blest.

CLXXXV.

A treasurer once resigned his trust,
 But only when compelled ;
 Though not dishonest nor unjust,
 Nor fond of what he held.
 He lost it as the story shows,
 But how he gained it no man knows.

CLXXXVI.

He failed to play a worthy part,
 Not knowing till the proof was made
 That he was being tried and weighed
 To see what lay within his heart ;
 And vanity was found therein,
 And folly, which are both of sin.

CLXXXVII.

A mighty monarch once obtained
 The empire of a realm unblest ;
 And kept the region he had gained,
 Till rudely dispossessed.
 But ere that hour he did much ill,
 And ravaged all the realm at will.

Long time against inferior foes,
 His dreadful army kept the field ;
 But when at last a mightier rose,
 The same was forced to yield.
 So, dangerous in defeat, they fled,
 And did much damage as they sped.

CLXXXVIII.

A mighty flood arose of old,
 And burst its banks and wandered wide ;
 And wrought much ravage where it rolled.
 And many drank thereof and died.
 And some were borne upon its tide
 To regions never seen before,
 Where henceforth they must needs abide,
 Cast up like wrecks upon the shore.

CLXXXIX.

Partly of the land was he,
 Partly also of the sea ;
 More than royal was his state,
 And his power was reckoned great
 By the lion-hearted folk
 Who submitted to his yoke.
 Yet a prisoner in his hall
 Was the author of his fall.

CXC.

Seen dimly through the gloom of night—
 With trembling awe—a fearful sight ;
 And clearly heard when all around
 Was hushed and still—an awful sound.

CXCI.

Rough words he spake, but not unwise,
 To one who err'd through overgrief ;
 Who rose, not daring to despise
 Such counsel, and from such a chief.
 The language grated on his ears ;
 Yet, rising, he repressed his tears
 As best he might, and cloaked his pain,
 And showed himself a king again.

CXCII.

He hastens on, league after league,
 Till, worn with hunger and fatigue,
 Beneath a tree he lays him down ;
 For one has sworn a mighty oath,
 And doubtless means to keep her troth,
 And death lies darkling in her frown.
 Sleep seals the eyes that see so much,
 Until he feels a friendly touch,
 And wakes, it may be, with a start,
 In terror of the tyrant's clutch,
 For haply he has dreamed of such,
 Here in the desert place apart.

CXCIII.

Though checked anon and chidden,
 He still pursued his way ;
 Permitted though forbidden,
 But suffered some delay.

His hope could not be hidden,
 Whatever he might say.
 Though mightiest of the mages,
 He failed before their eyes.
 Though sagest of the sages,
 His words alone were wise.
 And though he loved the wages,
 He could not grasp the prize.

CXCIV.

The sire is taken, but the son remains.

Thou thoughtest, weeping, and didst weep no more.
Still may we live, though scanty are my gains.

And then came famine and the failing store.
 And now again death enters at the door.

Perchance thou sayest, "Would to God we twain
 Had died together for the lack of bread.
 Then had there been an ending of my pain ;
 Nor wouldst thou more have suffered. In thy stead,
 Would I had perished or with thee were dead."

CXC.V.

A monarch as a last resource
 Sent forth, of old, a mighty force—
 Legion on legion, foot and horse—
 Against one man, and one alone ;
 And he no king, however small,
 Nor yet a giant great and tall,
 And yet he overcame them all,
 Though none were overthrown.

CXC.VI.

Received with joy and gladness,
 And tumults of delight,
 The end whereof was sadness,
 And loathing and affright ;

Though I was mean and lowly,
 They set me up on high ;
 A purpose most unholy,
 A sin of deepest dye.

By wicked hands exalted,
 Full soon was I abased,
 By righteous hands assaulted,
 Degraded and disgraced.
 Vain were the hopes they cherished,
 Who thought to make me great,
 For in the end I perished,
 And many shared my fate.

CXCVII.

The foe had departed whose coming they mourned,
 And so they returned,
 With fear in each bosom and hope in each breast ;
 But vain is their quest.
 Fresh trouble arises : their hopes are laid low,
 And that at one blow.
 Then answer their leaders, Arise ! let us fly,
 For why should we die ?
Abide in your land, and no longer rebel,
And all shall be well.
 Lo ! this is his answer whose counsel ye sought,
 And this is his thought.
 They trust not the message, for scant is their faith ;
 To linger seems death.
 A war-weary remnant, in fear of their foes,
 They sigh for repose.
 They seek for a region where peace may be found
 For men above ground.
 O ye that crave counsel, but will not be led,
 In vain have ye fled !
 Your troubles shall follow you whither ye fare,
 And meet with you there.

CXCVIII.

Seven men of old confess their sin,
And in the same way all begin.

The first destroyed a faithful friend,
And brought to an untimely end
A host of others, as he kenned.

Lean with long hunger comes the next,
Ragged, and worn, and inly vexed,
But nowise doubtful or perplexed.

The next appealed, but all too late,
To those who used him in their hate,
But now were careless of his fate.

The next confessed (he dared not lie)
When taken and about to die ;
For vengeance would not pass him by.

Another made it filled with fear ;
For lo ! a threatening form drew near,
And uttered words he quaked to hear.

The fifth one cried, by fear unstrung.
Twice over, heavy judgments wrung
The same confession from his tongue.

The last transgressed a plain command,
(’Twas fear he said that stayed his hand) ;
And vexed the highest in the land.

CXCIX.

They drink and are drunken, then, moody or mad,
They rave or are sad.
They drink and wax weak, but their drink is not
wine,
But something divine.

They drink of one cup, and the same is of gold,
 And fair to behold.
 They reckon not of this for their doom is therein—
 The meed of their sin.
 They reel and they stagger ; they clutch at the wall,
 And stumble and fall.
 They grope at noonday like a man in the night,
 Who longs for the light.
 The doorways of death and the hollow of hell
 Are bared by the spell.
 The grave is agape and the slayer draws near,
 And shall they not fear ?
 Yea, death is at hand, and the grave is agape,
 And who shall escape ?

CC.

In vain the birds descended,
 She drove them all away.
 And when the day was ended
 Night-prowling beasts of prey
 With gleaming eyes crept round her,
 And stealthy, cat-like tread ;
 But watchful still they found her,
 And faithful to the dead.
 All through the drought of summer
 Her weary watch she kept ;
 Prepared for each new-comer ;
 And lightly still she slept.
 But when the rains descended,
 And mingled with her tears,
 Her weary task was ended,
 And ended were her fears.

CCI.

A great swelling river arose in the past,
 Deep-flowing and vast ;
 Swift-rushing, wide-streaming—a river of God ;
 His scourge and his rod.

The strength of its waves, like their sum, was untold ;
 They roared as they rolled.

Like the sound of the sea was the tumult they
 made—

The world was afraid.

It rose in its rage like a beast from its den,

A terror to men.

It burst from its banks, and the land of its birth,

To roam through the earth.

It furrowed the lands as it thundered along,

Deep-channelled and strong.

The mountains were melted, the forests laid flat ;

No helper they gat.

The wolf of the wood, and the man-eating beast,

Were scared from their feast,

A prey in their turn to the tide as it sped,

Wreck-laden and red.

It rolled o'er the nations, and humbled their pride ;

They drank and they died ;

Or, stripped of their splendour, and shorn of their
 strength,

Were wasted at length ;

Or, carried away by the current, were borne

To exile forlorn.

It raged like a sea ; and the drowned and the dead

Encumbered its bed.

CCII.

By slow degrees ascending—

Not gourd-like in a night,

Though sudden was mine ending—

I gained a goodly height.

And proudly then I bore me,

Amid a haughty race ;

For none could stand before me,

Or hope to fill my place.

But suddenly assaulted,
 And that when all seemed well,
 I fell when most exalted,
 And not alone I fell.
 Then rudely was I sundered
 From all I held most dear ;
 And some beheld and wondered,
 And some were filled with fear.

My words before were many,
 My hearing had no flaw ;
 Mine eyes could vie with any,
 And more than most I saw ;
 But now mine eyes were darkened,
 And silent was my tongue ;
 And now to none I hearkened,
 Whate'er they said or sung.

Though of a warlike nation,
 I could not fight nor fly ;
 So great was my privation,
 So helpless now was I.
 No heart had I to nerve me,
 No arms at my command ;
 Nor had I hands to serve me,
 Nor feet whereon to stand.

A hostile hand upheld me,
 The same that brought me low ;
 And whither it compelled me,
 Unmurmuring must I go,
 To swell the jubilation,
 And raise the wondering cry ;
 So low was now my station,
 That once had been so high.

No longer now they flee me,
 No more with fear they shake
 Who once were sad to see me,
 And silent when I spake.

So faded all my glory.
 And now the tale is told,
 What think ye of my story ?
 And where is it unrolled ?

CCIII.

An empress once existed
 And prospered, unwithstood ;
 For much was she assisted,
 Though neither great nor good.
 She went where'er she listed,
 And did whate'er she would.

She suffered no annoy,
 Though smit with many a stroke,
 Her rank was more than royal,
 And pleasant was her yoke.
 Her people were most loyal,
 Although a recreant folk.

Her lovers were enchanted :
 She filled a higher place
 Than ever had been granted
 To any of her race.
 Whom think you she supplanted,
 And banished for a space ?

Her friends, and these were many,
 Beheld her, and were glad ;
 And yet she helped not any,
 When they were sick or sad.
 Nor gave she them one penny,
 Who gave her all she had.

And this, too, is recorded
 Where all the world may read :—
 Her best friend she afforded,
 No help in his worst need.
 And thus was he rewarded
 Who looked for no such meed.

What marvel he revolted ?
 For, fearing no man's frown,
 He openly assaulted,
 This tyrant of renown,
 By wicked hands exalted,
 And better hands cast down.

The breach was past all mending ;
 The hurt might not be healed.
 Though stubborn and unbending,
 She could not keep the field.
 And sudden was her ending,
 Though none could make her yield.

And so—to end my ditty,
 She perished with her kin :
 Cast out from her own city,
 Who once had reigned therein ;
 With few, perchance, to pity,
 And none to take her in.

THE END.

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ANSWERS

TO

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BY

RICHARD PHILLIPS.

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ANSWERS

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- CXCIX.—Jer. li. 7; xxv. 15—28.
- CC.—Rizpah. 2 Sam. xxi. 8—10.
- CCI.—Assyria. Isa. viii. 7.
- CCII.—The head of Goliath.
- CCIII.—The image of the goddess Asherah (translated
“graven image”), which Manasseh placed
in the temple. 2 Kings xxi. 7,

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